

# 2016

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Department of  
**FISH and  
WILDLIFE**



## **DISTRICT 13 HUNTING PROSPECTS**

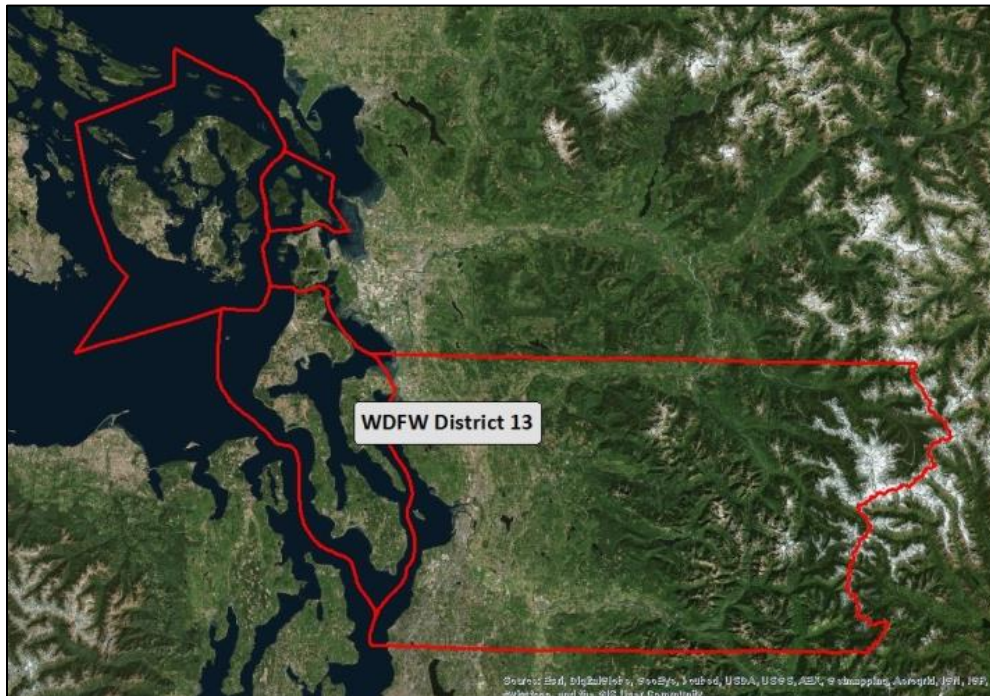
Snohomish, San Juan, and Island counties; Skagit County  
Islands

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## DISTRICT 13 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 13 contains all of Snohomish, Island, and San Juan counties, along with the islands of Skagit County. This includes Game Management Unit (GMU) 448 (Stillaguamish), the southern section of GMU 450 (Cascade), and the southern section of GMU 407 (North Sound) in Snohomish County. The islands of the San Juan Archipelago and Island County are divided into several GMUs, including GMU 410 (Islands), 411 (Orcas), 412 (Shaw), 413 (San Juan), 414 (Lopez), 415 (Blakely), 416 (Decatur), 417 (Cypress), 419 (Guemes), 420 (Whidbey) and 421(Camano).



Map of District 13 in Washington State

### SNOHOMISH COUNTY

In Snohomish County, a great tool for determining property ownership and boundaries can be found online at SCOPI, which is a mapping tool provided by the [County Assessor's office](#).

Much of the eastern portion of District 13 is public land managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. Two USFS Ranger Districts will have information on road and trail conditions for GMUs 448 and 450: the Darrington Ranger District (360-436-1155) (north county) and the Skykomish Ranger District (360-677-2414) (south county). Many roads have been decommissioned or damaged by floods in recent years. Trail conditions also vary, and information on specific trails, as well as many useful maps, can be found at the [Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest Recreation web page](#).



The remaining public land in Snohomish County is managed by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Northwest Region (360-856-3500). Hunters should be aware that many access roads to DNR lands are gated, and they should contact DNR to obtain the latest information about gates, available access routes, and road conditions. DNR ownership at Ebey Hill near the Jim Creek Naval Station is entirely surrounded by private property, and therefore for all practical purposes it is not accessible to the general public. Additional contact information is found on the [DNR Recreation](#) web page. Hot and dry summer conditions have resulted in some camp fire restrictions on state-owned lands. Contact DNR or USFS for updated fire information.

A number of private industrial timberland owners also manage land in GMU 448 (Stillaguamish). Many of their roads are closed to motorized vehicle traffic, but walking or biking access is allowed. Hunters are advised to scout their areas early and be aware that parking at access gates may be very limited. Gates should never be blocked. Hunters are further advised not to drive beyond any open gate unless they are certain the gate will remain open on their return. Active logging is taking place in some areas, so gates may be open in the morning, but closed and locked later in the day. Some access gates on private industrial timber lands will have signs that specify ownership and the rules that apply to the property. Hunters should strictly observe No Parking signs, as local landowners will tow vehicles found on their property.

Beginning in 2016, Weyerhaeuser Corporation will charge for access through individual permit sales. Walk-in and drive-in permits are sold through their [recreational website](#). Maps of their ownership will also be found at this website.

Early scouting is always particularly important in District 13. If fire danger is extraordinarily high, access may be closed to the public for all activities. If this happens, notices may be posted at property gates.



Much the Snohomish County portion of GMU 407 (North Sound) is dominated by homes on small acreages or relatively small farms. Hunters should obtain permission from landowners to hunt on private land and should be very mindful of where houses, livestock, and outbuildings are situated in relation to the areas where hunting will take place. Portions of the GMU are under firearm restrictions. Hunters should research landownership and understand firearm limitations prior to hunting. A map showing no shooting areas and shotgun only areas within Snohomish County is found [online](#).

## ELK

District 13 does not have an established elk herd within GMU 448 (Stillaguamish) or 450 (Cascade) boundaries. Small bands occur sporadically along Highway 2 at the south end of GMU 448. These groups typically range between the towns of Baring and Grotto, but occasionally move north as far as Sultan. Elk also sometimes come south of GMU 437 (Sauk) onto the Sauk Prairie in the north end of GMU 448. Two elk were harvested from GMU 448 in 2015. GMU 450 is currently not open for elk hunting because elk rarely occur there during hunting season, although small groups may spend portions of the summer at the higher elevations found in the GMU.

## DEER

### BLACK-TAILED DEER GMU 448

District 13 includes GMU 448 (Stillaguamish) and portions of GMU 450 (Cascade) and 407 (North Sound). The majority of the harvest comes from GMU 448. In 2015, 1,074 hunters reported harvesting 206 deer in GMU 448. Hunters who take the time to scout and learn the area will increase their likelihood of success. We strongly encourage planning and familiarization with local conditions well in advance of hunting season.

Much of GMU 448 is forested, with trees in a 30-50 year age class on public lands. This results in relatively tightly stocked stands where seeing deer may be challenging. On private timberlands, clear cutting has increased dramatically. However, food may be limited in clear cuts, so deer may be harder to find than anticipated. For hunters who enjoy walking or hiking in uncrowded conditions, GMU 448 offers a very rewarding opportunity to get outside and enjoy the season.

Parking and walk-in access to DNR and private forest land is available at the intersection of Menzel Lake Road and the P-5000 Road. This gate is located 4.6 miles south of the intersection of Alder Place and Menzel Lake Road in Granite Falls. Parking at other gated access areas in this general area may be limited. Hunters need to obey no parking signs when they encounter

them, as these signs indicate private property and owners may tow vehicles found on their property.



P-5000 Road access gate

At the south end of GMU 448, walk-in access is available off the Sultan Basin Road. This area has mixed public and private ownership, and hunters should pay close attention to signs designating areas where discharge of firearms is prohibited. Access to DNR lands requires a Discover Pass, and these areas will have signage. DNR properties are gated, and shooting is permitted only during legal hunting seasons.

Vehicle access is available on USFS roads around Snohomish County, but hunters should consult the USFS website for current information on road conditions and closures.



Typical DNR signs

## BLACK-TAILED DEER ISLAND UNITS

Beginning in 2013, GMU 410 was divided into several distinct new units assigned to individual islands. This change will provide more accurate harvest information and assist with the



development of management strategies on the islands. GMU 410 is now comprised of those remaining islands that were not assigned a specific number. The correct GMUs are as follows:

Gmu 411	Orcas island	GMU 412	Shaw Island
GMU 413	San Juan Island	GMU 414	Lopez Island
GMU 415	Blakely Island	GMU 416	Decatur Island
GMU 417	Cypress Island	GMU 420	Whidbey Island
GMU 419	Guemes Island	GMU 421	Camano Island

We ask that hunters pay close attention to the GMU they hunt and report accurately so we can improve our understanding of harvest on each island.



Photo by Doug Harms

### **GMUS 410-419**

Public access on islands within the San Juan Archipelago (San Juan and Skagit counties) is extremely limited. Deer in the islands are plentiful, but typically smaller than their mainland cousins. Most hunting occurs on private property. In San Juan County, by county ordinance, written landowner permission is required in order to hunt on private property.

Small parcels of public land are open to hunting on Lopez Island (GMU 414) on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands within the National Monument. BLM lands in the San Juan Islands

are administered out of the Wenatchee field office. Hunters should call (509) 665-2100 for information. Additional information is available [online](#).

The San Juan County Land Bank manages Lopez Hill, which continues to allow limited hunting. Lopez Hill will be open for hunting from September 1 through October 31. More information can be found [here](#) and [here](#). Questions can be sent to [timc@sjclandbank.org](mailto:timc@sjclandbank.org).

Overnight camping is not allowed in the National Monument or on Lopez Hill. Please check [Washington State Parks](#) and [San Juan County Parks](#) for camping.

Cypress Island (GMU 417) is largely owned by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR), but some parcels are privately owned. Maps, trails, and access rules can be found [online](#).



## **GMU 420 (WHIDBEY ISLAND) & 421 (CAMANO ISLAND)**

Deer are abundant on both islands. However, very little public land is available for hunting on any island, including Whidbey and Camano islands. Hunters should obtain permission from landowners prior to hunting on private property. [The Island County Public Works Department](#) owns a few small parcels on Whidbey and Camano islands open to hunting. Hunters should contact them directly for maps and restrictions.

Limited deer hunting will also be allowed on the Trillium Community Forest property, owned by the Whidbey Camano Land Trust. Hunters should contact the [Whidbey Camano Land Trust](#) for additional information regarding access dates, maps, and more. Hunting on this property is for the purpose of habitat improvement, thus hunting is limited to a few specific days within the total deer season.

Deer hunting at Naval Air Station Whidbey is open to military personnel and their guests. All hunters (military and civilian) need to purchase the installation hunting permit (\$13). This is the required authorization for access and to carry a firearm. Deer hunting areas are accessed by entering the SPB gate, and non-military guests must be in the same vehicle as the military hunter. For additional information, contact WNAS Biologist John Phillips (360-257-8873).

Hunters reporting incorrect GMU numbers continue to be a problem. One hundred eighty-two deer were reported as taken from GMU 410 in 2015, an unlikely number probably due to incorrect reporting. In general, the more populated islands with automobile access showed higher harvest trends in 2015, with 264 deer reported from GMU 420, 66 deer reported from GMU 411, 68 reported from GMU 413, and 45 reported from GMU 414.

## **BEAR**

The 2016 winter snow pack was lighter than typical and water levels in streams and rivers are low, indicating drought conditions that began in 2015 may continue. In fall, bears typically key in to huckleberry fields as a primary food source and move to lower elevations as weather cools or snow arrives. This year, berries will likely be patchily distributed and may be less abundant compared to normal snow pack years, potentially causing bears to move farther and more often than usual in search of high calorie foods. About 8 percent of hunters in GMUs 448 and 407 were successful last year, taking 66 animals from GMU 448 and 23 from GMU 407. Three percent of hunters were successful in GMU 450, with two bears harvested.

There are no bears in GMU 410. This is an error in the regulations that will be corrected in 2018. There are no bears in any of the islands within District 13 and all units except GMU 410 are closed to bear hunting.

## COUGAR

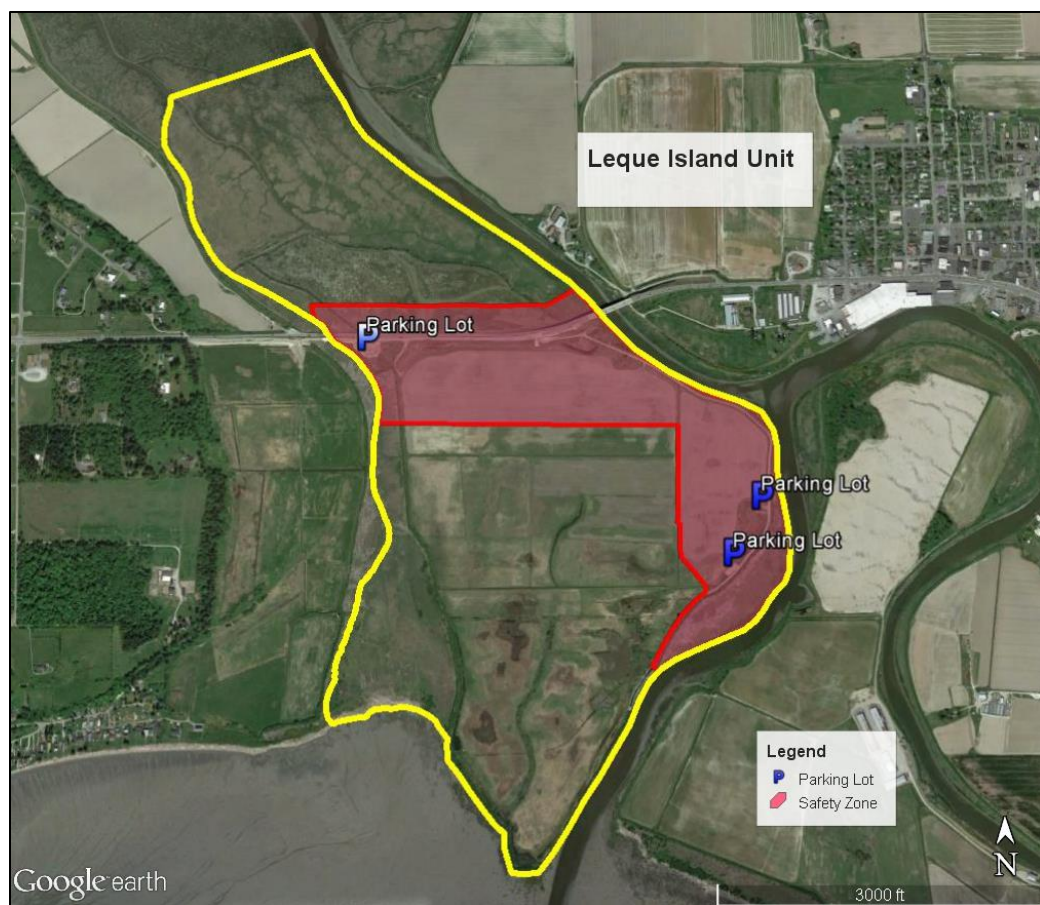
GMUs 448 and 450 are hunt areas with a harvest guideline of 9-13 animals. In these GMUs, the Director may close the cougar late hunting season after January 1 if cougar harvest meets or exceeds the guideline. Cougar hunters may hunt cougar from January 1 until the hunt area harvest guideline has been reached and the GMU is closed by the Director, or until April 30, whichever occurs first. It is each cougar hunter's responsibility to verify if the cougar late hunting season is open or closed in GMUs 448 and 450. Cougar hunters can verify if the season is open or closed by calling the toll free cougar hunting hotline (1-866-364-4868) or visiting the [website](#). The hotline and website will be updated weekly beginning January 1, 2017. Last year, the cougar harvest did not exceed the guideline and the units remained open throughout the season. A 2017 cougar tag is required to hunt cougars in April 2017.

## PHEASANT

Game farm produced pheasants will be released this fall on release sites, which are mapped on the [GoHunt](#) website and in the [Western Washington Pheasant Program booklet](#).

In Snohomish County, public pheasant and waterfowl hunting is available on the Ebey Island and Crescent Lake units of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area, and on Leque Island on the Skagit Wildlife Area. There are two access sites on the east side of the Ebey Island Unit. The first access site is under State Highway 2 on the northeast side of the property. The second access site is off of Home Acres Road just off of Highway 2. Access will be open on the west side of the property in the WDFW parking lot near the intersection of Home Acres Road and 43<sup>rd</sup> Street SE. Pheasants will be released on both the west and east parcels of the unit. The Crescent Lake Unit has two parking areas along Crescent Lake Road that provide access to this unit. The Ebey Island and Crescent Lake units will each receive 35-45 birds. They will be released on Friday and Saturday evenings, and on a varied schedule for Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings. All pheasant release sites on the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area will be open and follow the 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. hunting hours.

Leque Island will receive 45-60 birds that will be released on Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday evenings. Pheasant hunting occurs south of Highway 532, the remainder of the site is intertidal estuary outside of the dike. Parking is available at the end of Eide Road and at the Davis Slough parking area just off of Highway 532. Cover on the unit is in good condition, comprised of a mix of native grass fields and shrubs. There were no agricultural crops planted on the site this year due to a dike breach that occurred in March of this year.



Leque Island parking locations



Parking and pheasant release areas available at Ebey Island

In Island County, pheasant release sites on Whidbey Island include Bayview, OLF Coupeville, and Sea Plane Base (SPB) sites. Additional sites may be added on the north end of the island if sufficient cover exists and private landowner agreements can be negotiated. Hunters should check [online](#) for the location of specific sites. Fifteen to 20 birds will be released on Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday mornings, except for Bayview, where releases will be Saturday and Sunday mornings.

The SPB (Upper and Lower Game Ranges) and OLF Coupeville on the Whidbey Island Naval Air Station will be open this year. Access to the Sea Plane Base pheasant release site is open to all hunters. All hunters (military and civilian) need to purchase the installation hunting permit (\$13). This is the required authorization for access and to carry a firearm. Check in is done at the Torpedo Road gate by signing in and out of the logbook for the Seaplane Base and at the logbook in the parking lot for OLF Coupeville. Civilian hunters will be required to submit to a background check prior to hunting Navy property. As a result, hunts should be planned well in advance and all hunters are advised to check with WNAS Biologist John Phillips (360-257-8873) for updated rules and requirements.



## BAND-TAILED PIGEON

Band-tailed pigeons may be hunted in late September. A migratory bird authorization card is required and the daily bag limit is two birds. The birds can be found in managed forest lands with mixed conifer age classes that provide feeding areas adjacent to roosting areas. These types of habitat are often found on private timber lands or DNR lands, so expect the same gated conditions described above. Band-tailed pigeons have strong affinities for the same areas, so scouting before your hunt is important.

## GROUSE

Ruffed grouse is the common species in District 13, with blue grouse found at higher elevations. Ruffed grouse are typically found at elevations below 2,500 feet. Both species favor mixed timber habitats, often near water. Hunters should look for mixed conifer and hardwood areas, especially in riparian areas, for the most likely place to find grouse. Abandoned or low use logging roads are good places to look for grouse as well.

## WATERFOWL

For an excellent introduction to waterfowl hunting, see [Let's Go Waterfowl Hunting](#).

Strong spring and summer reproduction numbers in British Columbia and Washington suggest a strong 2016-17 season for numbers of birds potentially in the region. As always, weather conditions will influence where birds congregate.

Waterfowl hunting in District 13 is expected to be productive as long as weather conditions are favorable. The weather outlook for the coming fall and winter is for normal conditions. Typically we see a slow start to the hunting season. During mild winters, ducks tend to stay in more northerly areas of British Columbia. However, as colder fronts move in and conditions become colder and wetter, hunters can expect increasing numbers of waterfowl to arrive in District 13.

## SNOHOMISH COUNTY

Waterfowl hunting is available on the Ebey Island and Crescent Lake units of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area, and on Leque Island on the Skagit Wildlife Area. There are two access sites on the east side of the Ebey Island Unit. The first access site is under State Highway 2 on the northeast side of the property. The second access site is off of Home Acres Road near Highway 2. Access will be open on the west side of the property in the WDFW parking lot near the intersection of Home Acres Road and 43<sup>rd</sup> Street SE. During pheasant hunting season, waterfowl hunters may only enter and hunt the Ebey Island Unit between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. The Crescent Lake Unit has two parking areas along Crescent Lake Road that provide access to this unit.

The Spencer Island Unit of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area will be boat access and walk-in this year. Parking for the Spencer Island Unit will be one quarter mile back from the bridge to the island near the sewage treatment facility buildings.

At this time, we have tentative agreements with landowners for eight waterfowl quality hunt units, located primarily in the Stillaguamish Delta, and five snow goose units in the same general area in the coming season. These sites are all located on private lands enrolled in the Private Lands Access Program. Three waterfowl quality hunt units will be Hunt by Reservation and two of these units have been planted with barley. Additional units may be added in the fall. More information about individual sites as they are finalized, including maps and access rules, as well as the program in general, may be found at the [WDFW Hunting Access](#) site. Waterfowl hunt units on private lands will open as crop harvests are completed and other conditions are met, so not every unit will be available on opening day. We anticipate that all units will be open by mid-November.



The Hunt by Reservation program offers a quality hunt experience by limiting the number of days a site is hunted while guaranteeing the site will be available to the reservation holder. To make a reservation, visit the WDFW link above, create an account, choose a hunting site that is in the Hunt by Reservation category, and book the reservation. Reservations become available two weeks prior to the hunt day at 8:00 a.m. sharp. A fast internet connection improves chances of securing a reservation.

Reports from Wrangal Island, where our lesser snow geese breed, indicate extremely high numbers of chicks hatched and survived to fledging. Therefore, we are expecting higher numbers of geese coming into Washington than were seen last winter. In addition to the traditional high concentrations in the Stanwood area, snow geese appear to be expanding in Snohomish County and it is likely that at least 5,000-10,000 birds will spend some time in the Snohomish system.

The Port Susan Game Reserve, which restricted Canada goose hunting, has been eliminated.

## WHIDBEY ISLAND

Access to public lands on Whidbey Island is extremely limited. Hunters should be aware that Deer Lagoon is closed to hunting by a County Ordinance that restricts the discharge of firearms. The Whidbey Camano Land Trust owns parcels at Crockett Lake and Dugualla Bay, and their ownerships are closed to hunting. Land Trust Dugualla Bay parcels are shown here. Hunters should contact the [Whidbey Camano Land Trust](#) with any questions regarding boundaries and ownership at Crockett Lake.



Whidbey Camano Land Trust parcels (in blue and green) at Dugualla Bay

Waterfowl hunting on Naval Air Station Whidbey Island is open to military personnel and their guests. All hunters (military and civilian) need to purchase the installation hunting permit (\$13). This is the required authorization for access and to carry a firearm. Duck blinds are accessed by entering the SPB gate and non-military guests must be in the same vehicle as the military hunter. For additional information, contact WNAS Biologist John Phillips (360-257-8873).

## CAMANO ISLAND

Iverson Spit Preserve is managed by Island County Parks, within the Island County Public Works Department. Hunting is allowed at Iverson Spit outside of the dike in the intertidal area. Questions regarding the preserve should be directed to the Island County Public Works Department (360-679-7331).



Iverson Spit Preserve park boundaries

The tidelands near English Boom County Park on the north end of Camano Island include some privately owned parcels. Hunters wanting to access tidelands in this area must obey all signs indicating private ownership, no trespassing, or no hunting. These signs are legitimate and legal and attempt to indicate which parcels are privately owned and therefore not open to the public.



## PORT SUSAN BAY

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) allows hunting over a majority of tidelands under their ownership at Port Susan Bay. However, the restored area, which used to be diked, and a 150-yard buffer around it is off limits to hunting, and there is no hunting access from TNC property (see map below). For further information regarding hunting TNC ownership, contact Jolene Boyd, TNC Puget Sound Stewardship Coordinator, at [jboyd@tnc.org](mailto:jboyd@tnc.org) or by phone at (360) 419-3125.



Map of restricted hunting area owned by The Nature Conservancy